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Stone, Melville Elijah

Race prejudice in the Far East

[New York]

[1910]

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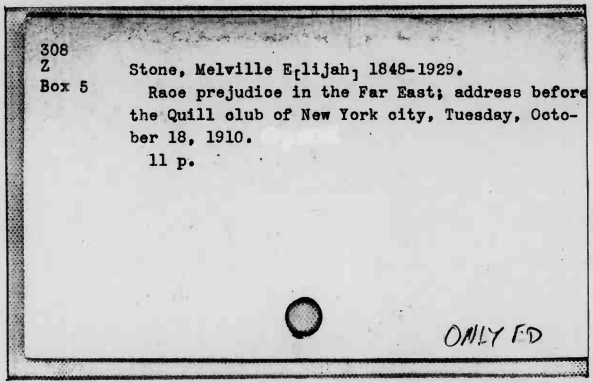
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Race Prejudice in the Far East

ADDRESS

OF

MELVILLE E. STONE

BEFORE

THE QUILL CLUB

OF

NEW YORK CITY

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18

1910

March 1913 MN

My Friends:

I am here to talk to you in a very casual way of the impressions left upon my mind by a hasty journey in Asia. If you expect more, you are certain to be disappointed. I haven't the slightest intention of offering any final opinions, nor any pretense that I know it all. I am not at all the sort of person who can spend one or two days in a country and then tell you how it should be governed. I have no capacity which enables me to gallop over a continent and write a book about it. My largest hope is to find someone in this company who may know less about this matter than I do, and perhaps I may furnish him a thought or awaken his interest. And as I believe the subject a vital one, if I have done thus much, I shall feel that I have done good.

It is a large order to talk of Asia. If Thackeray in opening his lectures on "The Four Georges" found it impossible to "condense 70 years into 70 minutes," what shall one attempt on this occasion? And, although whole libraries have been written concerning Asia and the Asians, there is a widespread belief that, because of the differences in our mentalities, it is not possible for us ever to understand them, or they us. Kipling says that "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." The "oldest inhabitant" in India or China or Japan is sure to tell you that the Oriental mind is unfathomable. I have not the temerity to challenge these opinions. And yet I venture to suggest that there is an older authority holding a different view, and that I still have some respect for Cicero's idea that there is a "common bond" uniting all of the children of men.

And whatever our ignorance of, or indifference for, the Orientals in the past, it is well to note that conditions, both for us and for them, have entirely changed within the last decade. There is a new United States and a new Asia. The Spanish war created the one; the Russo-Japanese war the other. When we acquired the Philippine Islands we assumed the government of

eight millions of Orientals and touched elbow with all Asia. When Japan defeated Russia, the Oriental learned his power. For untold centuries he had respected power. His native sovereign was an autocrat, who enslaved him, beat him, killed him, if need be. Then came the European, with powder and guns and warships; and thereafter the white man behind the gun represented power. A handful of British with cannon could enforce obedience from hundreds of millions of people. Suddenly, the little Empire of Japan, one of the least among the Asiatic powers, challenged, fought and defeated the great European Colossus, Russia. The Asian discovered then that it was not the white man, but the gun that did the business; he learned that a yellow man behind the gun was quite as effective as a white man, and he found that the Christian soldier alone was afraid of death. Then followed in travail, the birth of the new Asia. There were actual revolutions in Turkey and Persia, a startling recrudescence of unrest in India and Ceylon, and, at this moment, China is in a state of revolutionary ferment.

What is to be the outcome? What does all this mean for the future of the world? Let us view the problem from the political, the commercial and the moral aspects. How long will the 6,000 soldiers we have in the Philippines be able to keep our flag afloat among 8,000,000 of natives? How long will the 75,000 English soldiers in India be able to maintain British sovereignty over 300,000,000 of Asians? Believe me, these are not idle questions. They are up to us for an answer, whether we will or no, and upon our ability to make answer will depend the future of what we are pleased to call our Western civilization. I would not be an alarmist, and yet I would have you feel that Macauley's suggestion of the New Zealander on a broken arch of London Bridge, sketching the ruins of St. Paul, has come to be more than an extravagant figure of speech. And I am convinced that there is real danger awaiting us unless we mend our ways. It is not the Asian who needs educating, it is the European. I am not worrying half so much about the heathen in his blindness as I am about the Christian in his blindness. Asia is awake and preparing for the coming struggle. And we are doing very much to force the issue and to prepare her for the contest. For a century we have been sending at enormous cost our missionaries to all parts of the hemisphere to civilize. There may be doubt as

to the amount of proselyting we have been able to accomplish: there can be no possible doubt of the work we have done to strengthen the Asian people politically and commercially.

A statesman of Japan said recently in a conversation I had with him: "Your missionaries undoubtedly have done good for the morals of our people, but they have done far more for our health and strength as a nation. They come to us with doctors, and nurses, and hospitals and schools. Before Perry's arrival 2,000,000 infants were born every year in Japan, and for lack of proper sanitary measures they died. Now with the hospitals and sanitary and hygienic methods introduced by the missionaries, the 2,000,000 children are born, but they do not die." This is true of every other Oriental country. Meanwhile in the countries of Europe the increase of population is slow, and in some countries, as in France, it is hardly increasing at all. In America race suicide is becoming alarmingly prevalent.

In the recent war between Russia and Japan, Dr. Louis Seaman, of this city, who visited their field hospitals and talked freely with their army surgeons, found that the Japanese had outstripped us in almost every department of military surgery. The foreign colonies of Tokio and other Japanese cities employ native physicians in preference to Europeans.

Asia is coming into her own again. It was Asia through Arabia which gave Europe the literature, the arts and the sciences, which we have developed and which we now boast. Gunpowder was probably invented in China; it was certainly introduced into Europe from Arabia. The finely-tempered steel of Damascus went over from Arabia at the time of the Moorish invasion of Spain, and its manufacture was continued at Toledo. The coppersmiths of Bagdad supplied the world's market with their wonderful productions centuries before there were any industries in Europe. Weaving of silk and cotton had its birth as an industry in Arabia, and the weaving of wool was learned by the Crusaders in the same wonderful country. Astronomy, mathematics, the mariner's compass, all came to us from the Arabs. One cannot have forgotten that the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Koran are all of Arabian origin. The inhabitants of Central Arabia have to-day the oldest liberal government—practically a republic—on earth. And if you go farther afield to India and China and Japan you shall find a civilization older than his-

tory and marvellous in its character. One cannot read that great library of Eastern Sacred Writings, edited by Dr. Max Müller, without being tremendously impressed.

It will not do for us to assume that ours is the only civilization. What are the basic virtues, the sum of which we call our Christian civilization? I hope we are all agreed that they are not primarily beliefs in certain theological dogmas, or certain forms of church polity, or in the shape or length of priestly vestments, but in the attributes of correct Christian living. Is frugality a virtue? Your Asian far exceeds us in frugality. Is industry a merit? No people on earth work as long, as persistently and as conscientiously as they. Is integrity esteemed? It is the unchallenged judgment of every European writer that the word of an Asian was good until they were corrupted by the inroads of Westerners. Is politeness, which is but another name for the golden rule, to be commended? Nowhere will you find such scrupulous politeness as is daily and hourly observed east of Suez. Is observance of law desirable? The peaceable and orderly lives which the great mass of the people of Asia have led for centuries attests their habits of obedience. There are cities in India, Japan and China with crowded populations running from a hundred thousand into the millions where there is scarce the semblance of police control and where crime is hardly known. They are a calm, thoughtful people, to whom what Mr. Arthur Benson has so well called "the gospel of push," and what our own vigorous Roosevelt calls a "strenuous life," is unknown. But I am not at all sure that this is an unmixed evil, for there are no "brain-storms" there and neurasthenia is provided for nowhere. In the light of the fact that the number of inmates in the insane hospitals of our country doubled in six years, according to the latest available statistics, I cannot but feel that we need less strenuosity rather than more. Compared with Western civilization, theirs will not suffer perhaps as much as you would imagine; and perhaps you will agree that the chief characteristics of our civilization are push and extravagance, and that in this respect they have the better of us.

All this brings me to my topic. And I must say that, paraphrasing Mr. Lincoln's words at Gettysburg, in large measure it is not for us to educate, but to be educated. We shall never meet the problems growing out of our relation with the Far East unless we absolutely and once for all put away race prejudice. I believe

the European snob in Asia is distinctly the enemy of the civilized West. And his coadjutor in this country is a fitting criminal yoke-fellow. Let me give you some illustrations of what I mean, —cases which came under my personal observation. From Bombay to Yokohama there is not a social club at any port or treaty point where a native, whatever his culture or refinement, will be admitted. At the Bengal Club at Calcutta last year a member in perfectly good standing innocently invited a Eurasian gentleman, that is, one who is half native and half European, to dine with him. It became known that the invitation had been extended, and a storm of opposition broke among the members. The matter was finally adjusted by setting aside the ladies' department of the club, and there the offending member and his unfortunate guest dined alone. The next day the member was called before the board of governors and notified that another like breach of the rules would result in his expulsion. The beating of native servants and workmen in India is a daily and hourly occurrence. It formerly was so at Hong Kong and Shanghai, but Mr. Sprague, the representative of the Standard Oil Company at Shanghai, told me that since the Russo-Japanese war the natives would not stand it, and that all beating of them by Europeans in that city had ceased.

While in Calcutta I attended a ball at Government House and noted that while one or two native princesses were on the floor dancing with white men, there were twenty or more native gentlemen standing about as "wall flowers." I called the attention of Lady Minto to the fact, and she explained that no white woman would think of dancing with a native; it would certainly result in ostracism. The son of a maharaja goes to England, is educated at Oxford or Cambridge, is lionized in the West End of London—mayhap he is honored with an invitation to Windsor. When he goes back home he may enter no white man's club; if he be fortunate enough to be invited to a white man's function, no white woman will dance or associate with him; and if by any luck he should marry a European, he, his wife and his children become outcasts. Although native troops, like the Sikhs, have shown undying loyalty to the British flag and on frequent occasions have exhibited courage in the highest degree, no one of them ever has or ever can achieve the Victoria Cross.

I have no thought, in saying this, of criticising British rule in India. I do not question that it has been of enormous bene-

fit. Neither do I doubt that under the administration of Lord Morley there is the most sincere desire to do all for India that the cause of humanity or Christianity may dictate. And I am also quite ready to say that the problem is a difficult one; that "the white man's burden" is one not easy to bear. I know that attempts to do justice are often misunderstood by the natives, are construed as evidence of fear. I know that the Bengalis, who are responsible for most of the unrest in India, are a silly lot whose lives and property would not be worth a groat were British protection withdrawn. I know that the beneficent British supremacy has been made possible only by the religious divisions among the natives. But this is all the more reason why the greatest care should be exercised not alone in India but throughout Asia, why the line of cleavage should not be permitted to pass from a religious to a racial one, and the danger that it may do so grows with every hour.

On the one hand, there is a very perceptible loosening of the bonds of religious caste; not infrequently to-day high class Brahmins, not only shake hands with Moslems and Christians, but even sit at table and eat meat with them. On the other hand, there was startling evidence, during the recent war, of the secret racial tie that binds all Asia. We are accustomed to think and speak of India as a British possession, forgetting that after all only five-eighths of its area is British, while there are over 600 native princes and chiefs, each governing a state, which is more or less independent. Some of these princes are enormously wealthy. So far as they have any religious bent, they are Hindu, or Mahratta, and in this rspect not at all at one with the Japanese, who are either Shinto or Buddhist. Yet while the war was on, it was not uncommon for a rich Maharaja to call at Government House and ask if it would be regarded as an unfriendly act for him to buy Japanese bonds. Of course the Viceroy was forced to say it would not, since Britain and Japan were in treaty alliance. Of course these investments were made through London banks, and the extent of the transactions will never be known. We do know, however, that there was a mysterious absorption of Japanese securities which never could be accounted for by either the London financiers or our own.

What I feel is that the danger of Asiatic ethnic solidarity is immensely accentuated by the attitude of certain of the British

themselves. It goes without saying that the younger son of a British nobleman, who does not succeed to his father's estate and does not go into trade, but who finds the only outlet for his activities in the Army or Navy, the Church, or in the Indian civil service, becomes far more of a snob, and therefore far more of a danger, when dealing with natives in Asia than he would be permitted to be at home in England. And the harm that one such person can do, it may take an army to undo.

I have spoken thus freely respecting the conditions in India because I feel at liberty to do so, since my mother was born under the British flag and I have a very large number of relatives in the British Army, Navy and Church. But I should be wholly lacking in fairness if I did not ask your attention to similar cases of race prejudice in which we are involved and which are equally dangerous,—in other parts of Asia.

Let me tell you a story as it was told me by a Harvard graduate who is now a Minister of the Japanese Crown. "When Perry came here," said he, "and Townsend Harris (of blessed memory) followed him and made the first treaty with Japan, it was stipulated that we (the Japanese) should give them ground for their legation and their consulates, compounds. We did so. Yokohama was then an unimportant place, a native fishing village. It was the natural port of Tokio, but as we had no foreign trade, that meant nothing. We gave them ground in Yokohama for their consulate. Merchants and traders followed and we gave them ground also for their shops. The British and the Russians and other European nations came in and we gave them like concessions. In Yokohama, as you know, houses and stores are not numbered as you number them in America—110 Broadway, for instance—but are numbered in the order in which they were built. Thus, "Number 1 Yokohama" may be half a mile distant from "Number 2 Yokohama." This method of numbering still survives. It is rather a significant fact that number 9 Yokohama—the ninth building erected there—is a house of prostitution which to-day has international fame as the resort for foreigners. Well, as time went on the village grew into a city. Under the treaty of Townsend Harris and all the other treaties the right of extra-territoriality was recognized. That is, whenever a case arose in which a foreigner was involved, it must be tried by the consul of the country to which the foreigner belonged. As time went on, Sir Harry Parks, the Brit-

ish Minister, asked for ground in Yokohama for a race-track. We cautiously suggested that horse-racing was said to be wicked by the European missionaries. But he insisted and we gave him the ground. Then, we were asked for ground for a social club, for the foreigners, and we gave them a plot on the sea-front, the finest piece of land in the city. Later, they wanted to play cricket and football, and finally golf. Well, we gave them ground for this. As the city grew, this cricket-field was so surrounded by buildings that it was practically in the center of town. Understand, all of this ground was donated. Last year we suggested that we could use the cricket-field, and we offered to give in place of it a field in the suburbs. As railways had been built meanwhile, the new field would be even more accessible than the old one was when we gave it. The foreigners demurred and proposed that we buy the old field and with the purchase money they would secure a new one. Finally, we compromised by paying for their improvements and furnishing them a new field with like improvements free of cost. The question of taxation arose. Yokohama had grown to be a city of 300,000 inhabitants, with millions of dollars invested in buildings, owned by foreigners. We asked no taxes on the ground we had donated to them, but we did think it fair that they should pay taxes on their buildings. They said no, that everywhere in the West the buildings went with the ground. We submitted the question to the Americans, but they dodged the issue, saying they would do whatever the others did. Then under the law of extra-territoriality we were compelled to leave the decision to the British consul, and he decided against us. The case has now gone to The Hague Court. Finally, when I tell you that in the light of this history, no native Japanese gentleman has ever been permitted to enter the club-house or the grand-stand of the race-track, or to play upon the cricket-field, perhaps you will understand why there is some feeling against foreigners in Yokohama."

When Commodore Perry went to Japan in 1853 he wrote a letter to the Japanese Emperor containing these words:

"With the Americans, as indeed with all Christian people, it is considered a sacred duty to receive with kindness, and to succor and protect all, of whatever nation, who may be cast upon their shores, and such has been the course of the Americans with all Japanese subjects who have fallen under their protection."

With his warships Perry compelled Japan to receive citizens of the United States and to grant them extraordinary domiciliary

rights. From that day to this we have spent enormous sums to establish schools in Japan for the education of the natives. Yet we now are seeking to deny them admission to this country and we are refusing to permit them to attend our schools.

In the Philippines a ruffian American soldier, recruited from the purlieus of New York, shoves a native gentleman from the sidewalk of Manila with an oath, calling him a "Nigger." Yet that "Nigger" is very likely a cultivated gentleman, educated at the Sorbonne, in Paris.

The infamous opium war upon China, and the equally infamous existent compulsion of China to receive Indian opium, are outrages no whit worse than our own extortion of absurdly exorbitant damages for losses of American ships to Chinese pirates in the Yellow Sea. For many years there was no more profitable undertaking for the owner of an American clipper ship than to sell it and its cargo to the Chinese Government after it had been looted by the pirates.

Such, my friends, is something of the shameful record of our relations with the Far East. In India, in China and in Japan, we have been the guests who have enjoyed their hospitality, only to rise in the morning and say to our hosts, "You must not sit at table with us." Believe me, this condition cannot endure. Politically we are in grave danger. Commercially, with their industry and their frugality, they are fast outstripping us. They have ceased buying flour from the Minneapolis mills, because they are grinding Indian and Manchurian wheat with Chinese labor at Woosung. A line of ships is running from the Yellow River to Seattle, bringing 72,000 tons a year of pig iron manufactured at Hankow and delivered, freight and duty added, cheaper than we can produce it. In Cawnpore, India, with American machinery they are making shoes so cheaply that the manufacturers of Lynn can no longer compete with them. The cottons and silks which we one time sent from here to Asia are now made in Japan and China.

Thus are we related to them politically and commercially. Socially they are all saying to us: "Stop cheating us, stop swindling us, stop your treating us as your inferiors who are to be beaten and robbed." Japan is crying out, "Treat us fairly and we will go more than half-way. Leave to us the question whether Japanese laborers shall go to America to annoy you, and

we will stop them. But do not say that you will admit the lazaroni of Hungary and Italy and Russia, simply because they are white, and shut us out because we are yellow.

The Sinhalese, natives of Ceylon, while I was in Colombo, addressed a remarkable communication to the Governor-General. They said a hundred years ago there was established in the United States a new theory of government,—that there should be no taxation without representation. "Now," said they, "we ask a share in the government of the island. We pay taxes. You may fix a property qualification and say that no one having less than a thousand pounds sterling shall share in the government. We shall not object. You may also fix an educational qualification. You may say that no one but a college graduate shall take part in the government. We will not object. In short, you may fix any qualification except a racial qualification. That would not be fair." "And what answer have you to make?" I asked Mr. Crosby Rolles, Editor of *The Times* of Ceylon. "To meet their request," he replied, "would mean to turn over the government of Ceylon to them at once, because there are 6,000 of them and only 5,000 English men, women and children. We must stop educating them."

What do you think of that for a remedy? Personally, I do not think it will work, any more than I think any rule of arbitrary repression can endure. I cannot bring myself to sympathize altogether with the views expressed by Mr. Roosevelt in his recent Guildhall speech. I take refuge in what seems to me the larger experience and riper judgment of Lord Curzon, of Kedleston, who in July, 1904, was also given the freedom of the City of London in Guildhall, and on that occasion used these words: "Depend upon it, you will never rule the East except through the heart, and the moment imagination has gone out of your Asiatic policy your empire will dwindle and decay." I am also impressed with the correctness of Lord Morley's attitude. Speaking in support of the Indian reform proposals two years ago, he said: "The Founder of Christianity arose in an Oriental country, and when I am told that Orientals always mistake kindness for fear, I must repeat that I do not believe it, any more than I believe the stranger saying of Carlyle, that after all the fundamental question between any two beings is, Can I kill thee, or canst thou kill me? I do not agree that any organized society

has ever subsisted upon either of those principles, or that brutality is always present as a fundamental postulate in the relations between rulers and ruled."

And Curzon and Morley have many supporters in their view. In smug complacency, you may close your doors which look toward Asia, while you open wide those which look toward Europe; you may refuse the Oriental admission to your schools, while you accord the privilege to any child of a European; you may pile import duties mountain high, and raise our standards of living to any pitch of extravagance; you may build warships without limit, and you may continue to treat the Asian as legitimate prey. But I am confident that it will not avail.

As a soldier, whether at Omdurman, in the Sudan, or on 203-Metre Hill, at Port Arthur, the man of color has shown himself a right good fighting man; in commerce he has, by his industry, perseverance, ingenuity and frugality, given us pause; and before the eternal throne his temporal and his spiritual welfare are worth as much as yours or mine.

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